

CAMOUFLAGE ARTICLE

FIELD AND BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[001] The present invention relates to an article displaying a camouflage pattern, and more particularly, to articles of wearing apparel and other items that have a camouflage pattern thereon.

[002] Camouflage, and articles having a camouflage pattern, are ordinarily used for purposes of concealment. Hunters wear camouflage clothing to conceal themselves from their quarry. Military uses of camouflage are concerned with concealing military personnel and equipment from enemy forces. The camouflage patterns are designed to blend into the environment. To this end, the civilian and military camouflage materials typically use patterns and colors found in the environment in which the person or object to be camouflaged is located. Thus, camouflage materials have been developed that mimic the colors and patterns found in forests, fields, marshes, and deserts. Typically, these camouflage materials use earth tone colors to blend in with the environmental surroundings. Perhaps the most familiar camouflage pattern is the traditional woodland camouflage pattern. It has irregular, random appearing areas or blotches of different sizes and different colors. The traditional woodland pattern camouflage typically has at least four colors, including shades of tan, brown, green (olive drab) and black. More modern, nontraditional camouflage patterns for hunters have also been developed having complex three-dimensional representations of various outdoor settings, such as a forest, marsh, corn field, tree bark, wetlands, etc. Examples of these types of camouflage materials include the RealTree® line of camouflage materials from Jordan Outdoor Enterprises and the Mossy Oak® brand camouflage materials from Haas Outdoors Inc.

[003] People sometimes consider it fashionable to wear camouflage patterns in everyday use, rather than solely in hunting or military applications. Certainly, traditional camouflage patterns and colors have been worn for this purpose. Apparel manufacturers, recognizing the popularity of using camouflage in apparel, have also offered various kinds of “urban camo” or “city camo” apparel. These city camo patterns mimic the graphic patterns of the more traditional camouflage materials and, like traditional

camouflage materials, typically have at least four colors. The selected colors have, for example, included color tones of similar to the concrete, brick and asphalt materials found in urban environments. Other city camo patterns have been produced using several different shades of the same color, such as light, medium and dark blue, for example.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[004] The present invention departs from the conventional use of camouflage patterns for the purpose of concealment. The present invention provides articles that use traditional camouflage graphic patterns, but with colors that do not serve the traditional concealment function of camouflage. Articles in accordance with the present invention are referred to herein as “novelty articles” since they may be used or worn to provide amusement, interest and enjoyment rather than for the purpose of concealment. In accordance with the present invention, the selected colors used in the articles are readily identified by ordinary observers as corresponding to the colors of a particular group, such as a school, team or government entity. The novelty articles are worn or used by individuals to indicate their affinity for or affiliation with the particular group represented by those colors.

[005] According to the present invention, a novelty article is provided having an exposed surface that is covered by contiguous distinct zones of at least two contrasting colors. These contiguous distinct zones are arranged to define a camouflage pattern. The colors used in the novelty article are colors that do not blend with environmental colors and are selected to correspond to colors adopted by a particular group, such as a school, team or government entity, for which the user of the article has an affinity or affiliation. In specific embodiments, the colors correspond to the team colors of a collegiate sports team or a high school, middle school, amateur, or professional sports team. In further specific embodiments, the novelty article may additionally include a logo or symbol of the team.

[006] The colors adopted by sports teams and schools are typically bright colors rather than subdued earth tone colors. For example, many team colors or school colors include at least one bright primary or secondary color selected from the group consisting of yellow, orange, gold, red, blue and purple. This bright color is typically paired with a

contrasting color, which can also be a bright primary or secondary color, or a lighter or darker contrasting neutral accent color such as black, white or silver. Sometimes a third color is used as an accent in addition to the two main colors. In any event, the team colors or school colors are selected so as to be highly visible to human observers, and to form an aesthetically pleasing color combination suitable for team uniforms, banners, pennants and similar items. The colors adopted by teams and schools do not ordinarily include the colors most often seen in traditional camouflage patterns, namely colors such as beige, tan, brown, or olive drab.

[007] The present invention contemplates using the unique camouflage patterned combinations of team and school colors on a wide variety of items that may be used in relation to a team or school event, examples of which include, but are not limited to, wearing apparel, coolers, umbrellas, stadium blankets, seat cushions and insulated beverage covers. When used as an article of wearing apparel, the article may take the form of a jacket, poncho, shirt, pants, shorts, shirt, hat, visor, bandana, or other wearing apparel articles.

[008] The present invention also provides method for producing a novelty article which includes steps of forming on an exposed surface of the article contiguous distinct zones of at least two contrasting colors, arranging the contiguous distinct zones to define a camouflage pattern, and selecting as the colors of the camouflage pattern, colors that do not blend with environmental colors and that correspond to colors adopted by particular group for which a user of the article has an affinity or affiliation.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING(S)

[009] Having thus described the invention in general terms, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings, which are not necessarily drawn to scale, and wherein:

[010] FIG. 1 is a front perspective view showing a jacket having a camouflage pattern in accordance with the present invention.

[011] FIG. 2 is a front perspective view showing a stadium blanket having a camouflage pattern in accordance with the present invention.

[012] FIG. 3 is a front perspective view showing an insulated sleeve for a beverage bottle or can having a camouflage pattern in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[013] The present inventions now will be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which some, but not all embodiments of the invention are shown. Indeed, these inventions may be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will satisfy applicable legal requirements. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout.

[014] The term "camouflage pattern" is used herein to refer to the shape, but not the color, of any graphic pattern of the type commonly used in sporting camouflage materials for hunting or for military uses. The camouflage pattern is typically made up of irregular or random-appearing zones of contrasting colors that form shapes designed and intended to help blend into the environment. The camouflage pattern can take various forms or shapes, such as the familiar woodland pattern of irregular spots that resembles the pattern of sunlight filtering through trees, as well as more recent, three-dimensional appearing graphic patterns resembling the forms of tree limbs, tree bark, corn fields, leaves, rocks, marsh grass, etc.

[015] The term "color" is used herein with its ordinary meaning to refer to a visual attribute of an object as a result of the object reflecting or transmitting light. This visual attribute enables persons to differentiate objects even though the objects may be otherwise identical in size, form or texture. The color of the object may be described in terms of a person's perception of the hue, lightness (or brightness) and saturation using names such as red, blue, pink, green, yellow, white or black.

[016] In FIG. 1, a camouflage jacket 10 in accordance with the present invention is shown. The jacket 10 is of a conventional construction, having a torso portion, sleeves, and a front opening that can be closed by suitable closures, such as a zipper, buttons, snaps or the like. The jacket may be fabricated from a suitable textile material, such as a woven shell fabric made from yarns of natural or synthetic fibers such as cotton, rayon, nylon, polyester, acrylic, or polyolefin. The jacket may include an inner shell or liner (not shown) and a waterproofing barrier layer, such as Goretex®, as is well known.

[017] The outer exposed surface of the fabric from which the jacket is made is covered throughout by a camouflage pattern. The camouflage pattern is defined by contiguous

distinct zones indicated by the reference characters **11**, **12** and **13** of three different contrasting colors. The respective contiguous color zones **11**, **12** and **13** touch one another and define distinct transitions from one color zone to another. In the specific embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the shapes of the contrasting color zones **11**, **12**, **13** provide an irregular or random appearance of the type that is commonly seen in the traditional woodland camouflage pattern. However, it will be understood that the present invention is not restricted to this particular camouflage pattern. The camouflage pattern may be applied to the surface of the fabric using known textile processing methods such as screen printing or transfer printing. When the substrate is a fabric produced as roll goods, the contiguous distinct zones of color that define the camouflage pattern are irregular in shape but repeat along at least one dimension (typically the longitudinal or machine direction) of the substrate.

[018] While the shapes defined by the contrasting zones **11** and **12** resemble the graphic shapes of conventional and well known camouflage patterns used by hunters and by the military, the colors selected for use in the camouflage pattern are distinctly different from the colors ordinarily seen in traditional camouflage materials. Traditional camouflage materials typically use earth tone colors selected to blend into the environment, such as shades of beige, tan, brown and olive drab for example. The colors used in the camouflage materials of the present invention are selected so that they do not blend with environmental colors. Unlike conventional camouflage materials, the colors used in the present invention are bright colors such as yellow, orange, gold, red, blue and purple. Typically, at least one of the colors is a primary color (red, yellow or blue) or a shade variation thereof, or a secondary color (green, orange and purple) or a shade variation thereof. As is known from color theory, the primary colors red, yellow and blue are the three pigment colors that can not be mixed or formed by any combination of other colors. All other colors are derived from these three hues. The secondary colors green, orange and purple are the colors formed by mixing the primary colors.

[019] These bright primary and secondary colors are the colors most frequently adopted and used by teams and schools. Typically, the team colors or school colors include one of the aforementioned primary or secondary colors, paired with either another contrasting bright accent color or a contrasting neutral accent color such as white,

black or silver. Team colors and school colors do not typically include fluorescent high visibility colors, such as the hunter's orange color that is commonly worn for safety purposes by hunters and construction workers.

[020] A unique and advantageous feature of the present invention is that the colors used in the camouflage materials are selected so as to be readily identifiable as the colors adopted by a particular group, such as a team or school. Moreover, the color combinations are such that they will be readily associated with a particular school or team without the necessity of having the school name or logo present on the article to convey this relationship to the observer. Thus, a user or wearer of an article, such as the jacket 10, can display his or her affinity for or affiliation with the school or team whose selected colors are on the article. This provides a way to demonstrate support or team spirit for the school or team.

[021] In order that the selected colors will be readily identifiable by the ordinary observer as the colors of a particular school or team, the shade of each color must match the color shade adopted by the particular school. For example, in order to be readily identifiable as corresponding to the team colors of the University of Tennessee, which are orange and white, the selected colors should include the particular shade of orange that is used by the university (e.g. PMS151 from the Pantone Matching System), and not just any orange shade. Similarly, in order to be identifiable as corresponding to the University of North Carolina, whose colors are blue and white, the selected colors must include a shade of light blue, similar to sky blue, which has become known as "Carolina blue" (e.g. Pantone 278C). The Pantone Matching System is a popular color matching system used by the printing industry to match colors by indicating a Pantone name or number. Most colleges, universities and professional teams identify their approved school or team colors using Pantone numbers.

[022] Also for purposes of ready identification, it is preferred that the number of different predominant colors used in the camouflage article be limited to no more than three. Most schools or teams use two main colors, and may also use an additional main color or accent color so that the team can have different appearing light and dark jerseys for home and away games. When more than three predominant colors are used in the camouflage material, the impact or effect upon the ordinary observer is changed. While

the pattern will still be recognized as a pseudo-camouflage pattern, the pattern is not immediately identifiable as corresponding to a particular team or school because of the diversity of other colors or shades present.

[023] The color combinations can be selected to correspond to the colors of a group such as a college or university or the school colors for a high school or middle school. The selected colors may also correspond to team colors of a club sports team. The color combinations may also correspond to the colors used by a government entity, such as the colors of the flag of that entity. For example, patriotic colorful camouflage materials may use the colors of the United States flag, red (PMS193), white, and blue (PMS 281).

[024] Examples of some of the most commonly used color combinations for colleges and universities include the following:

Table 1

School	Bright Main Color	Contrasting Main Color
Air Force	blue	silver
Alabama	red (crimson)	White
Arizona	red (cardinal)	blue (navy)
Arkansas	red (cardinal) (PMS199)	White
Auburn	orange (PMS172)	blue (PMS289)
Boston College	red (maroon) (PMS202)	gold (PMS874)
Clemson	orange	purple
Duke	blue	white
Florida	orange	blue
Georgia	red	black
Illinois	orange	blue
Kansas	red (crimson)	blue
Kentucky	blue	white
Michigan	blue	yellow (maize)
Mississippi	red (cardinal)	blue (navy)
Nebraska	red (scarlet)	yellow (cream)
North Carolina	blue (carolina)	white

NC State	red	white
Ohio State	red (scarlet)	gray
Penn State	blue	white
South Carolina	red (garnet)	black
Stanford	red (cardinal)	white
Tennessee	Orange (PMS151)	white
UCLA	yellow (gold)	blue
Wake Forest	yellow (gold) (PMS873)	black

[025] In accordance with one specific embodiment of the present invention, the jacket or other article is not only produced with colors corresponding to a particular team or school, but also a logo or symbol of that team or school is provided on the article. Thus, as seen in FIG. 1, the jacket includes the team logo 16 applied to the front or back of the jacket. In the embodiment shown, the team logo is applied as an appliqu  to the jacket. The logo or symbol could also be formed by embroidery directly on the jacket. In other embodiments of the present invention, the team logo could be integrated into the graphics of the camouflage pattern itself. In this regard, the logo pattern could be featured prominently in the graphic pattern, or alternatively, the logo could appear subtly as part of the graphic pattern. When used in combination with selected colors that are readily identifiable with a particular team, this provides a particularly unique way for a person to express his or her affinity for or affiliation with that team.

[026] In addition to the jacket shown in FIG. 1, the principles of the present invention are applicable to various other articles of wearing apparel, such as ponchos, shirts, T-shirts, pants, shorts, skirts, hats, caps, visors, bandanas and the like. Additionally, the principles of the present invention can be applied a variety of articles related to or used in association with sporting events or team sports, examples of which include coolers, umbrellas, stadium blankets, seat cushions, insulated sleeves for beverage cans or bottles, team pennants, tents, awnings, chair seats and various other articles. The concepts can also be applied to articles unrelated to sporting events or team sports, including articles such as tarps, automobile covers, boat covers, tote bags, and luggage. By way of illustration, but not of limitation, FIG. 2 illustrates a stadium blanket 20 having a

camouflage pattern thereon and FIG. 3 illustrates an insulated sleeve 25 for a beverage can or bottle having a camouflage pattern. It should be evident that the present invention is not limited to specific articles or to specific substrates, but can be implemented in a variety of article using various substrate materials including woven, knitted and nonwoven fabrics, films, foam sheeting, plastic, metal and paper.

[027] Many modifications and other embodiments of the inventions set forth herein will come to mind to one skilled in the art to which these inventions pertain having the benefit of the teachings presented in the foregoing descriptions and the associated drawings. Therefore, it is to be understood that the inventions are not to be limited to the specific embodiments disclosed and that modifications and other embodiments are intended to be included within the scope of the appended claims. Although specific terms are employed herein, they are used in a generic and descriptive sense only and not for purposes of limitation.